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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000733

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: AGREEMENT REACHED IN DOHA

REF: BEIRUT 729

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) At 0230 local time, Lebanese political leaders participating in the National Dialogue in Doha presided by Qatari PM and FM Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim and the Arab League reached a compromise on the distribution of the 19 parliamentarian seats in Beirut, paving the way for a full-fledged agreement beginning with the election of consensus president Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) commander Michel Sleiman. At 1030 local time the participants held a press conference to announce the details of the agreement. Informal Embassy translation provided in paragraph 6, below.

¶2. (C) The majority and opposition participants agreed on the following: 1) the election of Michel Sleiman; 2) the formation of a national unity government with 16 seats for the majority, 3 for the president, and 11 (a blocking third) for the opposition; and 3) a new electoral law using the 1960 law, based on small "qada" districts, but with modifications for the city of Beirut.

¶3. (C) The issue of Hizballah arms was not addressed directly; instead, borrowing language from the May 15 Arab League agreement that precipitated the National Dialogue, it called for all parties to commit to abstain from or return to the use of weapons or violence in order to achieve political gains, as well as a dialogue on ways to reinforce the state authority throughout all of Lebanon's territory and its relations with the various parties on Lebanese soil in such a way to guarantee the safety of the state and people. This dialogue will be launched and continue under the chairmanship of the president once elected and as soon as the national unity cabinet is formed and in partnership with the Arab League.

¶4. (C) Speaker Berri said he would call for an election within 24 hours. Reports are that the election will take place on May 25. (Note: May 25 is also Lebanese Liberation Day, the anniversary of the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. End note.) Sleiman's hometown of AmChit is preparing a celebratory event for May 22, and press reports indicate that cleaning crews are preparing the Baabda presidential palace.

¶5. (C) In the press conference, Speaker Berri directed Hizballah to dismantle the tent city surrounding the government's offices at the Grand Serail that it erected in December 2006. Workers already had begun taking down the tents by noon the same day.

¶6. (C) While the opposition, predictably, expressed satisfaction with the agreement (muted satisfaction on the part of Aoun, who did not secure the presidency for himself out of the deal), initial reactions from members of the majority were cautiously optimistic:

Future Movement leader Saad Hariri: We are always ready to give concessions for the sake of coexistence, and open a new page for reconciliation. The wounds are deep, especially mine, but we only have each other. All members of the March 14 forces have made sacrifices. We want all Lebanese to live together in peace.

Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun: The solution we have reached is not seen as perfect by any of the parties. Each party has taken its minimum demands, which was the common point. I hope this agreement is a starting point for a genuine meeting between the opposition and the majority. Other pending problems will be solved in Beirut, and there is no need to worry about anything.

Hizballah MP Hussein Hajj Hassan: The Doha agreement is a new phase in which to build the state of Lebanon.

Former President and Phalange leader Amine Gemayel: We are satisfied with the accord, particularly regarding the part that deals with the arms issue and spreading state authority throughout Lebanon.

Telecom Minister Marwan Hamadeh: Today we have no victor, no vanquished, but one winner which is Lebanon.

Druze MP Akram Shehayeb: This accord which was baptized in blood came to salvage our people, our country and our institutions.

Future MP Nabil de Freij: We are happy that we have reached an agreement but implementation is yet to be seen.

Independent MP Michel Murr: This is the beginning of a

national Lebanese reconciliation and Lebanon should go back to normal life.

¶7. (U) Informal Embassy translation:

In accordance with the Arab initiative to contain the Lebanese crisis, and according to the agreement that was reached by the Lebanese parties under the auspices of the ministerial committee in Beirut on May 15, 2008, which is an indivisible part of this announcement (attached) the national dialogue convention convened in Doha during the period May 16-21 2008 with the participation of the Lebanese political leaders who are members of the Lebanese dialogue table, who asserted their attachment to saving Lebanon and to coming out of the current political crisis and its dangerous repercussion on the coexistence and civil peace among Lebanese as well as their assertion to the principles of the Lebanese constitution and the Taef agreement. As a result of the convention meetings and discussions held as well as the bilateral meetings conducted by the presidency of the Arab ministerial commission and its members with all the participants at the convention, it was agreed upon the following:

¶11. The parties agreed that the speaker of the Lebanese parliament will call for a session for parliament in accordance with the established rules within 24 hours to elect the consensual president Michel Suleiman as president of the republic, knowing that this method is the best from a constitutional point of view to elect a president under these exceptional circumstances.

¶12. Forming a national unity cabinet of 30 members with 16 ministers for the majority, 11 for the opposition and 3 for the president. The parties, in accordance with this agreement pledge not to resign nor obstruct the work of the government.

¶13. Adopting the cada in accordance with the 1960 law as an electoral district whereby the cadas of Marjeyoun-Hasbayya remain one electoral district as well as Baalbeck-Hermel and West Biqa'-Rashayya. As for Beirut, it is divided as follows:

¶11. First district: Ashrafiyeh, Rmeil and Saifi

¶12. Second district: Bachoura, Medawar, Port

¶13. Third district: Mina Hosn, Ain Mreisseh, Mazraa., Musaytbeh, Ras Beirut and Zokak Blat

Agreeing on referring the reform measures mentioned in this draft law proposal to parliament and which was prepared by the national commission to prepare an electoral law chaired

by Minister Fouad Boutros to discuss in accordance with the prevailing procedures.

¶4. In accordance with the implementation of the Beirut agreement mentioned, particularly what is mentioned in articles 4 and 5 which stipulated :

1-- All parties will commit to abstaining from the return to the use of weapons or violence in order to achieve political gains.

2-- Launching dialogue on ways to reinforce the state authority on all its territory and its relations with the various parties on Lebanese soil in such a way to guarantee the safety of the state and people. Therefore, the dialogue was launched in Doha regarding reinforcing the state authorities according to article 5 of the Beirut agreement and an agreement has been reached upon the following:

Banning the use of weapons and violence as well as resorting to weapons and violence in case disputes arise irrespective of the nature of these disputes or under any circumstances in such a way that guarantees not breaking away from the national partnership contract which is based on the Lebanese determination to live together within a democratic regime, and to limit the military and security authorities upon the Lebanese and those residing in Lebanon in the hands of the state, which constitutes a guarantee for the of coexistence and Lebanese civil peace. All parties commit to this

--Applying law and respecting state sovereignty in all Lebanese regions whereby there will be no safe haven for any outlaws, as a sign of respect for the rule of law and to hand over all those who commit crimes or violations to the Lebanese judiciary.

This dialogue will be resumed under the chairmanship of the president of the republic once elected and as soon as the national unity cabinet is formed and in partnership with the Arab League

--All political leaders reassert their commitment to stop using the language of defamation, political and sectarian incitement immediately.

--The Arab ministerial commission will deposit this agreement with the Arab League general secretariat once signed.

This agreement was signed on May 21, 2008 in Doha by all participating Lebanese political leaders in the presence of the chairman and members of the Arab ministerial commission.

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